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SUBJECT: ADVISOR TO PM HATOYAMA SAYS U.S. SHOULD "STAY THE COURSE" ON REALIGNMENT

Classified By: DCM James P. Zumwalt for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

11. (C) Summary: While the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) leaders do not have the same level of understanding of the U.S.-Japan Alliance as previous Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) administrations, they are learning quickly of its importance, former MOFA official and prominent security analyst Yukio Okamoto told DCM Zumwalt on January 7. The U.S. should "stay the course" on the Realignment Roadmap, although it is questionable whether the DPJ government could muster the political will to implement the agreement, given the difficult political environment in Okinawa, he added. Okamoto, who served as special advisor to the Prime Minister in the Hashimoto and Koizumi administrations, has recently become a security advisor to Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama, at the urging of Hatoyama's Defense Minister, Toshimi Kitazawa. End summary.

CHANGING PERCEPTIONS

12. (C) Leaders of the DPJ Government do not yet have the same level of understanding of Japan's national security interests or the benefits of the Alliance as their LDP predecessors, DCM was told on January 7 by Yukio Okamoto, a prominent security analyst and now an informal advisor to Prime Minister Hatoyama. However, they "are coming around" in comprehending the importance of Japan's security relationship with the United States. Okamoto noted that DPJ leaders now sound more and more like LDP members when expressing views in private on security policy. He added that problems in Alliance management stem from the DPJ's missteps in approaching issues related to the Futenma Replacement Facility (FRF) from the standpoint of domestic politics rather than Japan's national security. "This is now water under the bridge," observed Okamoto, and he described himself as a blunt-speaking "tutor" to DPJ leaders on issues like the need for a U.S. Marine Corps presence in Japan, the strategic value of Okinawa, and the threat posed by a rising China.

13. (C) Okamoto said that he had told PM Hatoyama that the best way forward in Okinawa was the FRF plan, but that this decision would require political courage, including the need to stand up to possible protests in the prefecture. Okamoto, however, questioned whether Hatoyama would be able to show this kind of leadership in "ramming home" the FRF plan, as he is "too nice," and "wants to be liked." The PM also listens to a wide variety of advisors, and tends to be influenced by whomever he has seen most recently. Besides Kantei advisors Jitsuro Terashima and Tadakatsu Sano, the Prime Minister also takes foreign policy advice from Ukeru Magosaki, a former Japanese Ambassador to Uzbekistan and specialist in the affairs of former Soviet Moslem republics. Okamoto has had to see Hatoyama once a week, he says, "to keep him on course."

ENGAGEMENT WITH OTHER DECISION MAKERS

14. (C) Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirofumi Hirano will play a

major role in the decision making process on FRF/realignment, Okamoto noted several times. He has briefed Hirano one-on-one on several occasions and has found that planned 30-minute meetings often stretch to an hour or more, due to Hirano's intellectual curiosity and many questions. Okamoto recommended that the USG engage with Hirano as someone who will have a positive influence on the FRF debate.

15. (C) DPJ Secretary General Ichiro Ozawa (who has made recent public statements opposing the FRF plan at Henoko) will have effective veto power over any FRF decision, if he chooses to use it, said Okamoto. The DPJ's self-imposed May deadline for a decision also has little significance, since Ozawa has already noted his intention to preserve the coalition at least until the July Diet Upper House election. Okamoto added, however, that Ozawa may find it wise to distance himself from the FRF issue, as he may see little political upside to his involvement.

LOCAL POLITICS

16. (C) Okamoto has close contact with both major candidates in January's crucial Nago City elections, incumbent Yoshikazu Shimabukuro and DPJ and SDP-backed Susumu Inamine. His current assessment is that Shimabukuro, who has conditionally accepted relocation of Futenma, has a roughly 60% chance of winning, although this remains guesswork at this point in the campaign. The primary issues in the race are pocketbook-driven, rather than FRF-related. A win by Shimabukuro would be helpful, but would not guarantee GOJ endorsement of the FRF plan. Conversely, Shimabukuro's defeat would make the FRF situation all the more difficult.

17. (C) Naha Mayor Takeshi Onaga, Ginowan Mayor Yoichi Iha and Diet Member Mikio Shimoji are likely to square off in the

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Okinawa gubernatorial race in November, according to Okamoto.

While not predicting a victor, Okamoto did note that Shimoji faces significant credibility issues within his own party, due to public criticism in Okinawa that was sparked by his support for the consolidation of U.S. Marine and U.S. Air Force units at Kadena Air Base (the Kadena consolidation option). Okamoto added that, due to Shimoji's influence, Foreign Minister Okada "wasted a critical month" in the autumn examining this option.

18. (C) Regarding Okinawa politics more generally, Okamoto observed that Okinawa reformists opposed the FRF plan precisely because it would alleviate pressures associated with the U.S. military presence. These reformists would prefer the status quo at U.S. Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Futenma as a way to maintain the political pressure necessary to rid Okinawa completely of any U.S. military presence, which is the reformists' long-term goal. Okamoto questioned whether DPJ leaders understood this dynamic.

19. (SBU) Bio Note: In addition to his past role as advisor to PMs during the Hashimoto and Koizumi Administrations, Okamoto served in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) for 28 years, and was the Director of the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty Division of the North American Affairs bureau at one time. Overseas postings included Cairo and Washington, as well as a stint with the OECD in Paris. Okamoto resigned from MOFA in 1991 to form a consultancy, Okamoto Associates.

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